

LETTER
FROM
THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,
TRANSMITTING

A communication from the Director of the Mint, asking appropriation to repair mint building in Denver.

JANUARY 11, 1887.—Referred to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, January 10, 1887.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, copy of letter of the Director of the Mint of the 23d ultimo, and its inclosures, in relation to the dangerous condition of the United States mint building at Denver, Colo., and the urgent necessity of an appropriation for its repair.

Respectfully yours,

D. MANNING,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE UNITED STATES SENATE.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
BUREAU OF THE MINT,
Washington, D. C., December 23, 1886.

SIR: I have on several occasions pressed upon your attention the dilapidated and dangerous condition of the building of the United States mint at Denver, conducted as an assay office.

I inclose herewith a report upon the subject from the assayer in charge, under date of October 12, 1886, including an estimate of \$1,800 for necessary repairs, in order to insure the safety of the structure for at least five years.

Action in this matter has been hitherto impracticable on account of the ruling of the First Comptroller that a specific appropriation of \$25,000, in two items, in the sundry civil appropriation act of July 7, 1884, was to be considered in the light of an annual appropriation, and that, as it was not expended during the fiscal year ensuing, it should be covered into the Treasury as an unexpended balance at the end of present fiscal year.

As the present condition of the building is regarded unsafe and perilous to human life, it is my duty to urgently recommend an appropria-

tion of \$1,800 for the repair of the United States mint building at Denver, to be expended by the Director of the Mint with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury.

The latter recommendation is made under the circumstance that the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department declines, under date of 22d instant, to concur in any recommendation for the repair of the mint building at Denver, on the ground, as held by him, that the building cannot be repaired, and that if the mint at Denver is to be maintained a new building must be erected; and for the further reason that Congress having failed to appropriate at its last session the sum asked for this building, this officer does not feel warranted in making a second recommendation.

The communication of the Supervising Architect is herewith inclosed
Very respectfully,

JAS. P. KIMBALL,
Director of the Mint.

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISING ARCHITECT,
December 22, 1886.

SIR: I return herewith your letter of this date and the three inclosures, and respectfully decline to concur in the recommendations made therein for the reason that it is held in this office that the building cannot be repaired, and if it is determined to maintain the mint at Denver a new building must be erected.

Congress having failed to appropriate at its last session the sum asked for this building, I do not feel warranted in making a second recommendation.

Respectfully yours,

M. E. BELL,
Supervising Architect.

Hon. JAMES P. KIMBALL,
Director of the Mint, Treasury Department.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
FIRST COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., January 5, 1887.

SIR: I am in possession of your letter of this date, in regard to the specific appropriation of \$25,000 to repair the mint at Denver, Colo.

I am satisfied that you have done everything within your power to make use of the appropriation made for the fiscal year 1885; but I must still regard the appropriation as an annual one, and not specific. It does not stand in the same attitude as an appropriation for a public building. I am sorry that the building is in its present condition, but if it were consistent with my duties to approve of your using \$1,800 of the appropriation, the use of the whole would be justified. As I suggested to you when we were talking about this matter, you had better ask Congress to put a clause in the sundry civil appropriation bill before it passes the Senate reappropriating the \$25,000 or so much thereof as

may be necessary for the repair of the building. I have no doubt that if the Secretary were to request Congress to do this it would be done.

My former letter on this subject, of December 21, is herewith returned.

Very respectfully,

M. J. DURHAM,
Comptroller.

Hon. JAMES P. KIMBALL,
Director of the Mint.

ASSAYER'S OFFICE, October 12, 1886.

SIR: Examination of the building and premises of the United States mint at Denver began with its foundation walls, which are found to be mainly constructed of sandstone, which, from their appearance and want of development at the quarries at the time they were taken, are evidently of the surface portion of the foundation, where they were subject to the destructive action of the elements.

The stone of the east foundation wall of the building has become very soft, the evident cause of disintegration being from excessive moisture at irregular periods, its source being from the roof water-conductor discharging its flow from the earth's surface at the wall of the northeast corner, where it was absorbed by the earth and stone. Thus intermittent as its action would be from rain and snow storms it has been an agent of destruction greater than the stone, had it remained permanently saturated and submerged. (This long-permitted error now finds its outlet 12 feet from the building into the street gutter.)

The east wall of the building (see photograph) is settled at the northeast corner, with a crack extending from the foundation up to and into the second story, with slight displacement of the windows. The south or front foundation exhibits like disturbances, as seen throughout the foundation on the east, but is here, as near as possible for me to determine, save by costly examination, limited to two places. The front wall, resting upon this foundation, has settled under the first window at the east corner, with a crack rising from the foundation up through the face of the brick wall and stone window-sill, up to the second story.

The second window from the west corner of the south or front wall (see photograph) a slight settling of the foundation; thence a crack in the brick wall, extending up through face of the wall and window-sill, displacing window-cap, and the wall between the windows of first and second stories; each window settled; this crack is open, with loosening of the bricks, and if not repaired soon will result in serious damage to the building.

The foundations of the west and north walls are each good. The walls of the building resting on these foundations have a few small cracks with loss of bricks; also visible places where mortar between the layers of brick has been partially washed out. The walls forming the main building have ever been without any protection or form of coping whatever; thus water finds its way into the interior of the brick-work. The tops of two of the chimneys are disfigured by a few heat-cracks, with loss of bricks on top.

The engine and boiler building, set against the main structure at the northwest corner, is settled slightly, scarcely worth mentioning, with visible wasting of mortar from layers between the bricks.

The building covering the pulverizer, used for grinding old crucibles, &c., and which, like the engine building, is set against the main structure at the northeast corner, has settled, with a trifling crack over the door, caused without doubt from the uncared-for flow of water used in making distilled water. (This error is now checked.)

From the northeast corner of the building to the alley of the City Block is a brick fence or wall, averaging some four feet in height above the level of the sidewalk; on its opposite or west side this wall rises some ten feet above the level of the yard that it incloses, four to five feet below line of sidewalk. This fence has leaned to the west, hanging over the yard in places about four inches from a straight line drawn at the top, and without a doubt caused from the earth filling used for bringing the sidewalk up to the established grade, some four to five feet, causing pressure upon the wall without support from its opposite or west side.

The small building on the premises, disconnected from the main structure, used for storage of fuel, is slightly disfigured from loss of an occasional brick at sides of the doorway where teams enter for unloading; also at some of the windows a few bricks are broken away. The bricks used in the construction of the main building were

manufactured by unskilled hands during the early settlement of Colorado. They are soft, showing rounded corners at the front door and at the corner of the building on the street level at a height that a man reaches when passing around the corner or on entering the building. The sidewalk around the south and east side of the premises was constructed mostly of spruce, hemlock, and balsam planks, the only timber native to the country. Age has made it very unsightly, and, to the pedestrian, dangerous in several places. It has been condemned by the city.

The building contractors and masons who have been called upon to examine the building, promptly state that the building is worth the needed repairs, which are practical to make and render the structure safe for a no less time than five years, and thence on for an indefinite time, greater or less. They advise the removal of the foundation under the east and south walls, so far as may be found necessary when repairs are in progress, and substituting therefor hard-burned brick; the removal of portions of the brick from the several cracked places in the main structure; also, of the several broken stone window sills and replacing with new, in a workmanlike manner; wherever there is an absence of mortar between the layers of the brick walls to make repairs and point, and in like workmanlike manner finish the coping with cement and repair chimneys. The wall or brick fence to be taken down and rebuilt substantially. The sidewalk to be repaired as follows: Take up the whole planking and replace the front or south sidewalk with hard-burned brick and curb-stone; on the east side lay new sills, and upon them such portion of the old plank as may be serviceable, and the balance fill with new plank. When all the repairs are completed, it is suggested that the exterior brick-work of the building, as a preservative of the soft brick, be covered with two coats of paint. If these repairs are made in a thorough manner, as I feel confident they can be, the whole structure will be preserved safely.

The walls may stand a few years, as they have for many years past, but the softening of the foundation stone, the opening of the cracks in the brick walls, exposing the interior to the action of the elements, more destructive at each additional year, it is evident the more prudent course is to make repairs promptly, since the whole can be done through a contract at a cost not exceeding \$1,800, thus insuring the safety of the structure for five years, and possibly for ten or twenty, if properly cared for; before which time expires Colorado hopes that her industries will have earned a new building embracing complete facilities for handling the bullion product of the great Western country, which product, also the mineral output, we find centering at Denver, as well as many other factors that form the commercial centers that our Federal Government is so deeply interested in and encourage.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant.

GEO. C. MUNSON,
Assayer in charge.

To Hon. JAMES P. KIMBALL,
Director of the Mint, Washington, D. C.